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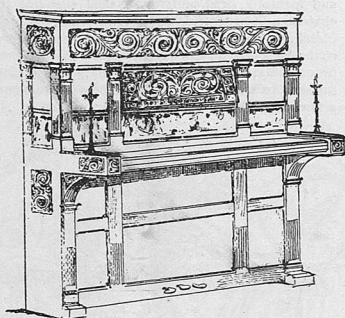
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A COTTAGE PIANO CASE.

THE piano is a bugbear to people who would furnish their homes in an artistic manner. Despite many attempts to improve it, a search in the various music warerooms will scarcely offer a single satisfactory specimen, and this, being found, will



DESIGN FOR PIANO CASE. BY J. H. PHILLIPS.

be as a rule merely a negatively pleasing object—an inoffensive thing that seems to apologize for its presence.

The main fault of most attempts to improve would seem to be to aid previous effects merely in ornamental effects. These would consist of ponderous pillars that carry no weight, or in mountings that would certainly be in the way, and could lay no claim to use; or would take the form of elaborate carvings, which may be good of their kind, and yet an excrescence upon the form which it professes to beautify.

The most objectionable feature in a cottage piano as it is are the legs, which are either gouty, misshapen pillars, huge trusses that would support a balcony, or meagre reeds in some cases do not even touch the floor. The fretwork front, silk lined, is not so popular to-day, but the solid panel, with meaningless incised ornament in gilt, which replaces it, is scarcely better artistically, and impedes the sound to a greater extent.

There are practical reasons for the generally ugly designs of modern pianos. Pianofortes are chosen for their musical qualities, and the music lover rightly prefers good mechanism and fine tone to a beautiful piece of furniture. A piano, however, ages rapidly, and musicians rank its life for a very few years, and however good a piano may be, the most commonplace pianist knows that a score of years will see the best instrument a thing of no account, a mere tinkling machine for schoolgirl practice. A piano, therefore, unlike mantelpieces, cabinets, tables or chairs, is not a lease-holder, but a mere lodger, a tenant for a few years, to be sold at a loss and replaced by a new one. Remembering this, one doubts the wisdom of employing very costly materials for its construction, or whether very costly art should be expended in its decoration.

But, even while taking into account the ephemeral character of the instrument, it is certain that the instrument might be made less common than it usually appears, and in the accompanying illustration of an

artistic piano, the designer does, to a considerable extent, solve the problem which confronts the architect and house furnisher of to-day in producing a most graceful and artistic design, more in accordance with the cost and importance of the instrument than the average commonplace piano case.

BOOK ILLUSTRATION.

MANY of our co-temporary book illustrators, under the spell of the English pre-Raphaelite art movement, adopt the style of bygone illustrators, and in many cases the work is decorative rather than pictorial. Indeed, a great many works are published in which the chief interest centers in the designs which decorate, rather than illustrate the text.



"THE PEACOCK GIRL," FROM "SALOME." BY OSCAR WILDE. ILLUSTRATED BY AUBREY BEARDSLEY.

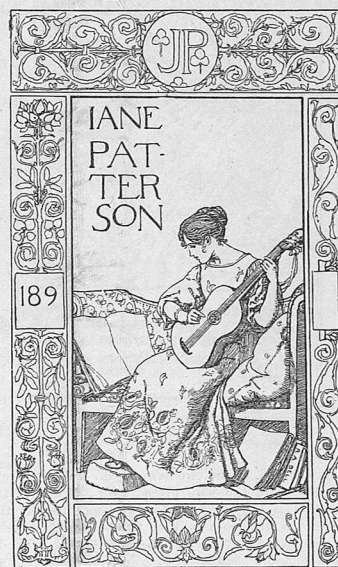
One of the most outre ornamentists of this class is Aubrey Beardsley, who exhibits convincing proofs of an extraordinary imagination, and a powerful handling of masses of black in his composition. He is extremely clever in the use of the single line, with which he weaves his drawings into a harmonious whole, "joining," as Mr. Reno says, "extremes, and reconciling oppositions." His work is weird and fascinating, and in the accompanying illustration of "The Peacock Girl," from the curious book entitled "Salome," by Oscar Wilde, makes us aware of the irrepressible personality of the artist, dominating the situation whether his composition does or does not illustrate the text. There is something audacious and extravagant in his work. He speaks a new language, produced by a fantastic conglomeration of art syllables. The subject is one that has, apparently, no definite meaning, and a hundred different titles could be given to the drawing, every one of which would be equally expressive of its purpose.

We fancy this product of the imagination will not appeal to the masses with any force. Such work will be valued only by collectors of rare and esoteric literature, who don't care a cent whether the picture is called "abrodozollal gynoclassy" or "macro-phontoffy superbus." Anyhow, it is a good specimen of pen-work, and pictorial skill.

BOOK PLATES.

THE English are nothing if not elaborate and decorative in all of their household belongings, and the subject of book plates is an important one with the average English householder. The collection of book plates, is, indeed, a mania as extensive as the collection of old coins, and these labels of ownership that are pasted in books, are in most cases designed with great skill, and are frequently emblazoned, not only with the name of the owner of the book to which the plate is affixed, but are frequently decorated with the crest and coat-of-arms, if he possesses such heraldic accoutrements, which are emblazoned thereon in all their glory.

The design of a book plate, by R. Anning Bell, which is given herewith, in addition to its specific use, gives a very clever suggestion in the way of interior decoration, by showing a young lady whose



A BOOK PLATE. BY R. ANNING BELL.

style of dress makes her a picture, instead of a fashion plate, and whose surroundings betray a life of luxurious leisure, such as we hope many of our fair readers enjoy.

When an Englishman builds a house one of his first objects is to build a fine library. Not content